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SUBJECT: LAUNCH OF HEALTH DONOR-COORDINATING GROUP IN
DJIBOUTI

1. U) A launching ceremony took place March 14 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to inaugurate a new donor-coordinating group in health in Djibouti and to formally announce to the public that both donors and the Ministry of Health are ready to work together to help the people of Djibouti. Focus of the coordination is expected to be on activities of donor agencies and the Ministry of Health as well as other international organizations such as those of the United Nations.

2. (U) The intent of the coordinating group, as originally proposed by Ambassador Ragsdale and USAID Representative Schulman, is to coordinate the activities of both donors and the Ministry of Health. The aim is to insure that resources are used without duplication of effort, and to assist the Ministry of Health achieve its goals as laid out in the Ministry's National Health Strategic Plan.

3. (U) The ceremony was opened by Minister of Health Dr. Mohamed Ali Kamil, who welcomed everyone and emphasized the importance of all Donors working together, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, to assist the government and people of Djibouti to have both better access and quality of services. He said the aim would be to reduce morbidity and mortality.

4. (U) WHO representative, Dr. Jihan Tawilah, whose remarks followed, stressed that in addition to the importance of donor coordination in financing reform of the health sector, donors should also coordinate and work with the Ministry of Health to identify more clearly what needs to be done and how to go about it. She cited the example of the need to develop human resources to be able to provide services to the population, pointing out that the issue is more complicated than just putting money toward training, but also involved identifying what kind and levels of cadres are needed, and how potential candidates would be found.

5. (U) The U.S. and French Ambassadors make brief presentations highlighting the need to support health reform in Djibouti and outlining what their respective governments were doing to assist the Ministry of Health to achieve its goals and objectives. In her remarks, Ambassador Ragsdale also cited needed efforts in addressing challenging Issues such as HIV/AIDS, and pointed out that the US government was intending to provide more resources to address this epidemic in Djibouti.

6. (U) During the main part of the agenda, Dr. Saleh Banoita, the Secretary General for the Ministry of Health, presented an outline

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of the National Plan of Action for the Ministry of Health, briefly discussing the five main objectives of this plan, in addition to several activities associated with each objective. Ali Sillaye, Director of Program Management in the Ministry of Health, followed with a presentation of the level of donor investment in health in Djibouti, showing a breakdown of the different donors, the specific areas of program support and the amount being funded. Next, Thomas Davin, the Acting Representative of UNICEF, spoke on behalf of both UNICEF and WHO concerning the Millennium Development Goals and where Djibouti was at this point in time with regard to year 2015 targets. He presented draft tables indicating that Djibouti, although making some headway, still had work to do in order to achieve the targets by 2015. Finally, Abdourahman, Director of Training and Cooperation at the Ministry of Health, presented the terms of reference for the operation of the "donor coordination committee" including the core group and its ad hoc committees, as well as the larger body, which was present at this ceremony.

7. (U) Overall, it was agreed that several areas needed to be closely monitored and supported by the donors and the Ministry alike including financing, development of human resources and working toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals in health. It was agreed that ad hoc committees should be formed on these topics and the core group would be informed of progress of these ad hoc committees. In turn, the core group would inform the larger group on a bimonthly basis of overall activities and efforts.

8. (U) Comment: Both donors and the Ministry of Health appeared committed to helping Djibouti achieve the ambitious goals spelled out in the Millennium Development Plan. The Minister of Health made it clear that Djibouti has a great deal of work to do in order to meet these challenging goals and must have the maximum effort of the donors and Ministry staff in order to achieve them. Donors voiced their desire to assist the Ministry on specific details and to insure that their

efforts would maximize their financial support. Concern for the long term was raised by USAID Representative, who asked the Minister of Health how much of the National budget went to health. His reply of less than 5%, and his assessment that more support was needed, raised donor concerns about sustainability. End comment.
RAGSDALE